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Washington D.C. – Nina Shea, commissioner at the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, gave the following testimony before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on January 20, 2011 at a hearing entitled “Christian Minorities Under Attack - Iraq and Egypt.”

The following is an excerpt from the testimony:

The October 31 violent siege of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Baghdad, Iraq, during Sunday mass and the New Year’s Day bombing attack against Coptic Christians emerging from a church service in Alexandria, Egypt, sent shock waves around the world.

But for those of us here in this room, these horrific atrocities did not occur in a vacuum. In Egypt, for the past two years, we’ve seen a dramatic upsurge in attacks against Copts, while in Iraq, churches have been targeted at least since 2004, and while the violence in the country has decreased overall, attacks against the Christians have increased. This fall, an al Qaeda group has explicitly linked the Christian communities of Iraq and Egypt in its threats to kill Christians.

Clearly, the governments of both nations have failed to ensure the right to freedom of religion or belief, especially for religious minorities, including Christian communities which have been in Egypt and Iraq for nearly two thousand years.

[Click here to view the entire testimony as prepared for delivery.](#)

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